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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN ESTH UPDATE, SEPTEMBER 2008

¶1. The information for this cable on environment, science, technology, and health issues in Kazakhstan is drawn solely from the Kazakhstani press.

- Unlicensed Pharmaceutical Production Facility
- One in Three Pregnancies Ends in an Abortion
- Mass Food Poisoning at a Karaganda High School
- New Pet Ownership Regulations Raise Concerns
- Criticism of East Kazakhstan Environmental Program

UNLICENSED PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTION FACILITY

¶2. The newspaper "Express-K" reported on September 25 that the Almaty oblast office of the National Security Committee had discovered an unlicensed facility manufacturing a wide range of pharmaceuticals in the town of Akzhar. The pharmaceuticals were being produced in unsanitary conditions and sold to government and private medical establishments in the city of Almaty and in other locales. The government is undertaking measures to ensure that these counterfeit pharmaceuticals are withdrawn from sale, "Express-K" explained.

ONE IN THREE PREGNANCIES ENDS IN ABORTION

¶3. The press reported on September 26 that every third pregnancy in Kazakhstan is terminated through an induced abortion. There are approximately 125,000 abortions in Kazakhstan annually. In the city of Almaty, the abortion rate is particularly high: there are 20,000-25,000 abortions per year, compared to approximately 32,000 live births. Physicians are very concerned about high pregnancy and abortion rates for teenagers.

MASS FOOD POISONING AT A KARAGANDA HIGH SCHOOL

¶4. The newspaper "Kazakhstan Today" reported on September 9 that the Karaganda oblast prosecutor's office was investigating a case of food poisoning that affected 65 students from a Karaganda high school who became ill after they had lunch in the school's cafeteria. Seven students were hospitalized. Two cafeteria

employees who were infected with dysentery bacillus appear to have been the vectors for the outbreak. Local law enforcement authorities opened a criminal case against the cafeteria's management, and the chief sanitary inspector of Karaganda oblast issued a decree requiring random inspections of all school cafeterias.

NEW PET OWNERSHIP REGULATIONS RAISE CONCERN

15. New regulations on pet ownership were issued by Almaty city authorities on August 30. Under the new rules, Almaty residents will no longer be able to own more than two cats and two dogs per household, and all cats and dogs will have to be registered with the authorities. On September 29, the newspaper "Vremya" published comments from animal rights NGOs, who maintained that these regulations run contrary to Kazakhstan's constitution. The "Vremya" article contended that the new regulations will lead to a significant increase in the number of abandoned pets.

CRITICISM OF EAST KAZAKHSTAN ENVIROMENTAL PROGRAM

16. The newspaper "Megapolis" reported on September 30 that deputies from the maslikhat (legislature) of East Kazakhstan oblast had criticized the region's 2008-10 environmental protection program, under which 2008 was declared to be the "Year of Environmental Protection" in East Kazakhstan. Following these criticisms, East Kazakhstan's governor convened a coordination council to discuss the program's implementation. According to "Megapolis," some members of the coordination council believe the program, which was based on recommendations from the national-level Ministry of Environmental Protection, does not meet the needs of the oblast and will not improve the environmental situation there.

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